Chapter

16

Exploring Perspectives on Canadian Identity

"A community of communities? A union of 10 equal provinces? A pact between two—or, with the natives, among three—founding peoples? A sea-to-sea notion that became a nation despite its vastness and cultural differences? Throughout the country's 128-year history, it has always been easier to be Canadian than to define the qualities that make one … Arguably, the real problem with Canadians is not that they have no notion of their country's identity, but rather, that they have too many. Which of the above concepts best defines Canada? The answer changes according to the part of the country where the question is asked. Even describing themselves just as Canadian will not do for many citizens, who also define themselves according to language or ethnic group, the region or province they come from—or, in the case of sovereignist Quebeckers, by the fact that they do not want to be Canadians at all."[1]

Figure 16-1 ▲

Canada Day parade on Ste-Catherine street in Montréal, 1 July 2005

1 Anthony Wilson Smith. "*Maclean's* 1995 Poll Finds Doom" 25 December 1995. http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=M1ARTM0010550.

Discuss the following questions in groups:

- What does being Canadian mean to you?
- How do the many national identities of Canadians influence our shared Canadian identity?

Chapter Issue

To what extent have perspectives on Canada as a nation contributed to the development of a national identity?

One way of looking at the factors that contribute to Canada's national identity is to reflect on individuals—past and present—that have influenced the way we feel about Canada. If you polled your classmates, you would likely find that not everyone would name the same people or groups as symbols of Canada's national identity. Some people think that Canadians' diverse perspectives are what form the cornerstone of our national identity.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first explores a range of recent and contemporary perspectives on national identity in Canada. The second looks at historical perspectives on Canada as a nation. The last section considers how Canadians have been able to forge a national identity with such contrasting perspectives. The following inquiry questions will be used to guide your exploration:

- What are various perspectives on national identity in Canada?
- What are historical perspectives of Canada as a nation?
- How can differing perspectives build a national identity?

This chapter will also help you develop a foundation for addressing the Main Issue for Part 4 (chapters 16–19): ***To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?***

Views on Canada's Identity

Question for Inquiry

- **What are various perspectives on national identity in Canada?**

Each Canadian alters and influences the fabric of Canada's identity. The process of understanding this evolution begins with you. Your unique skills, attitudes, efforts, and experiences all give rise to your *point of view*. You also shape the development of your version of Canadian identity by the choices you make in your daily life as to how you spend your time and with whom you spend it. Is it possible—or even desirable—to work toward a common understanding of Canada's national identity?

What impact do you think the United States, by far Canada's largest trading partner, has on Canada's national identity?

National Identity and Government Policy

If you consider the structure of your school, you will notice that within your classroom you and your classmates—as well as your teacher—have some independence from other classes. However, as a collective, all students, staff, and administrators are expected to abide by certain rules and regulations.

Just as one of the tasks of a school's administration is to build a unifying school spirit, a national government is responsible for trying to build a national identity. Government policies are often developed based on national interests, and building a national identity is one of those national interests.

However, since Canada is a pluralistic, democratic nation, a wide range of perspectives exists on many issues, including what the national interests are and what a national identity might be. For example, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit national interests may not support the same vision of national identity as those of the Canadian nation-state.

Leaders, such as former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, have argued that a strong federal government is needed to protect the interests of all, and that it can be a champion of individual rights and freedoms. Has the government of Canada been able to develop Canada's national identity, through policy and practice, into a single vision? Is it important for the government to attempt to do this?

Perspectives on Canada's Identity

Canadian national identity reflects a large number of perspectives. Consider the following speakers, their views on Canada, and who and what they represent. Finally, think about how they might affect Canadian national identity.

John Diefenbaker was Saskatchewan Conservative Party leader, and later prime minister of Canada from 1957 to 1963. Diefenbaker influenced the Canadian landscape by providing a guarantee that individual rights would be protected in the turbulent 1960s, in a Canadian Bill of Rights, which paved the way for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. Here is what Diefenbaker said about being Canadian:

I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.[2]

On 23 February 1995, Bill Clinton, the 42nd president of the United States of America (1993–2001), had this to say to the Canadian Parliament:

In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that literally tear nations apart, Canada has stood for all of us as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity, and respect.[3]

Sophie Milman's experience as an immigrant and a musician inform her identity as a Canadian. Seeking a better life, her family left the Ural Mountains of the former Soviet Union after it collapsed and then moved to Israel in 1990. Her journey ended when she was 15 and they settled in Canada. Milman has said:

The move to Canada was a huge culture shock once again. I had already gotten accustomed to Middle Eastern temperaments and the Canadian social dynamic was very hard to get used to. For the second time in my life I had to start over: learn the language (I started in English as a Second Language Class) and find a social niche. However, it was after my move here, in grade ten that I could finally express my love and appreciation for jazz. Linda Kreiner, my music teacher, gave me a solo on the music night about a month after the move. From that point on, for the rest of high school, I had lived from one music night to the other. Music gave me a sense of achievement, comfort and turned Canada from a foreign place into home.[4]

While to many, Canada is a successful model of co-operation and tolerance, others would argue that not everyone shares the benefits equally. Here is what former Saskatchewan premier Tommy Douglas had to say on 29 June 1983:

Canada is like an old cow. The West feeds it. Ontario and Québec milk it. And you can well imagine what it's doing in the Maritimes.[5]

Figure 16-2

Musician Sophie Milman

2 John Diefenbaker, *Canadian Bill of Rights*, 1 July 1960. http://www.allgreatquotes.com/canada_day_quotes9.shtml.

3 William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa," 23 February 1995. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=51017.

4 From: http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/musician.php?id=2726.

5 From: http://gistout.com/g4/bbs/board.php?bo_table=Society&wr_id=739&sca=History&page=1&sca=History.

Another critical view is expressed by Carole Trepanier, CUSO External Relations Manager. CUSO (Canadian University Services Overseas) is a non-governmental international development organization. It is best known for facilitating growth in developing nations throughout the world by raising funds or placing skilled Canadians, and is supported by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency).

In the 45 years CUSO has worked on the global stage, it is Canada's stellar reputation as a social justice leader that has opened the world to us. Thousands of Canadians—often volunteers—are collaborating with Indigenous communities all over the world, implementing development programs with the aim of reducing poverty, securing human rights, fighting health pandemics, promoting sustainable natural resource management and ensuring the survival of the vibrant cultures of our world.

At home, however, Canada's commitment to its own First Nations communities has disappointed and saddened Aboriginal leaders … It is time. Canada must end the injustices our Aboriginal communities have had to bear, and become the social justice leader [that] the world and Canadians can be proud of. It is a question of human rights. It is a question of Canadian leadership. Let's build a better Canada for all Canadians.[6]

Edward Grabb, sociology professor at the University of Western Ontario, remarks that

Canadians are notorious for wondering about who and what we are, and inevitably seem to define our own identity by comparing ourselves with Americans. More than a few observers have suggested that, in fact, Canadian identity is very difficult to describe or explain, except as a negative. In other words, whatever Canadians are, the one certainty is that they are not Americans.[7]

1. Organize and compare these different perspectives on Canadian identity based on their political, geographic, and cultural elements. What commonalities and differences do you see?
2. Based on Trepanier's and Grabb's statements, how do our international relationships influence our national identity?
3. Choose the quotation from Clinton, Diefenbaker, or Grabb and explain why you agree or disagree with it.

For more information on Canada's quest for bilingualism and biculturalism, follow the link on the *Perspectives on Nationalism* website.

The Official Languages Act of 1969, based on the findings of the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism, aimed to bring increased harmony to Canada. The Act recommended that English and French be official languages in Canada. It went further, however, stating that other heritage languages (non-English and non-French groups) should be promoted through "the encouragement of cultural diversification within a bilingual framework."[8]

6 Carole Trepanier, "Building a Better Canada. For Some," *First Perspective: National Aboriginal News*, 6 May 2006. http://www.firstperspective.ca/print_story.php?path=letters6may2006

7 Edward Grabb, "Democratic Values in Canada and the United States: Some Observations and Evidence from Past and Present," in Jerry Dermer (ed.), *The Canadian Profile: People, Institutions, Infrastructure* (North York: Captus Press, 1994), p. 129. http://oldfraser.lexi.net/publications/forum/1998/august/identity.html

8 From: http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/reports/ann2002-2003/01_e.cfm.

SKILL PATH

Using Technology to Create Presentations

Modern technology provides many helpful tools to use when researching and creating a presentation. Follow these steps when creating a presentation to ensure you are making the most out of the technology that is available to you.

Step 1 **Use Technology as a Source of Information**

Try to find technology-based resources, such as blogs, wikis, websites, databases, and CD-ROMs, that are helpful sources of information. Be aware that when using these sources, it is important to find out who exactly is providing the information.

Step 2 **Use Technology to Store and Organize Information**

Use technology as a tool for collecting information. For example, in a group, have one group member act as a "collection point" for all members so that your group is working from one electronic document, and save the document in a shared access folder. This also gives all members access to the most current version of your presentation materials. Choose a common font, layout, and format before starting so that data can be transferred easily between documents.

An important part of storing information is citing sources. It is much easier to use your references in your final presentation if you already have the information you need to cite your source. Get into the habit of recording all the details about where you found your information, including page numbers, URLs and dates, as part of your note-taking process. Consider keeping this information in a spreadsheet or table, as in the sample table here.

Step 3 **Use Technology to Create your Presentation**

There are many technology-based tools that can help you create a dynamic presentation, include presentation software, video software, word processors, and graphic design software. Remember that whatever tools you or your group decides to use must be compatible with your personal and school technology resources.

Practise It!

Your task is to find information about each of these candidates for "most influential Canadian":

- Chandra West
- Jelena Mrdjenovichm
- Sarah Polley
- Ryan Gosling
- Sandy McCallum
- Jeanne Sauvé

Now go ahead and research and create your presentation. Why and how has your chosen person been an influential Canadian? How has he or she contributed to the development of a national identity? Be sure to include one section that refers to the Chapter Issue: ***To what extent have perspectives on Canada as a nation contributed to the development of a national identity?***

Sources	Sub topic A	Sub topic B	Sub topic C
Source #1 [Include full bibliographic information here.]	[Include quotations and paraphrased ideas about each specific subtopic here, as well as reference information such as page numbers.]		
Source #2			

Pause and Reflect

Due to increased immigration and changes in immigration patterns, there has been debate about the role of multiculturalism in Canada. How has the Multiculturalism Act shaped your identity? Do you think it is desirable and viable to continue promoting the Multiculturalism Act in Canada?

The Multiculturalism Act of 1988, legislated by the Government of Canada, was aimed at building an inclusive Canada by supporting pluralism within a framework of individual rights.

> *It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to*
> *(a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage.*[9]

Canada was to become an experiment in multiculturalism. Could people with different cultures and traditions live together peacefully? Could there be "unity in diversity"?

Canadian Identity and Political Platforms

The debate concerning the future of Canada through "unity in diversity" has been a favourite of political leaders in this country in the last 50 years. Below are diverse perspectives on Canada and Canadian national identity.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who served as prime minister from 1968 to 1979 and from 1980 to 1984, was very vocal in expressing a distinct vision for Canada:

The die is cast in Canada: there are two ethnic and linguistic groups; each is too strong and too deeply rooted in the past, too firmly bound to a mother culture, to be able to swamp the other. But if the two will collaborate inside of a truly pluralist state, Canada could become a privileged place where the federalist form of government, which is the government of tomorrow's world, will be perfected.[10]

Jacques Parizeau is another recent example of a political figure who has altered the course of Canadian identity though policy and practice. During the 1960s in Québec, Parizeau played a substantial role in politics as an economic adviser and as Minister of Finance from 1976 to 1984. He became the leader of the Parti Québécois in 1988, and Québec's premier in 1994. From the late 1960s onward, Parizeau was a committed sovereignist and worked progressively toward establishing a Francophone nation-state in North America. The following article discusses Parizeau's views on sovereignty and nationalism:

According to Parizeau, the role of the nation state is to protect and expand the economic and cultural interests of its people.

"In spite of the great strides of globalization and contrary to what all the pundits have been repeating for forty years, there are not less and less nation states in the world, but more and more," he said.

In support of this claim, Parizeau cites that there were 192 members of the United Nations at the turn of the century.

Figure 16-3 ▲

Trudeau hugs a Canadian flag that blew in his face while riding a train at a railroad re-engineering factory sponsored by CIDA, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 20 November 1983.

9 From the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988. http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/multi/policy/act_e.cfm.

10 Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 178–179.

"When Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in Montréal a few years ago that by the turn of the century there would be 200 members of the UN, a comment of the Gazette was, 'Well, he's crazy.' And his statement was understood by the Gazette as a sort of support for separatists. There are more and more countries. Why? That's a … good question and it deserves an answer," he said.

One might assume that a small nation state would have trouble surviving in today's global market, but according to Parizeau, this is not the case.

"We made an extraordinary discovery in the second half of the 20th century. No matter how small a country, it can prosper, develop and increase enormously its standard of living on one fundamental condition: that it belong to a large market.

"It's not particularly surprising that during this exciting period we call globalization, countries define themselves by their language or their culture or both. And the remarkable thing is that all federations that are bi-cultural or multi-cultural are in trouble: Spain, Canada, Great Britain, Belgium, and the former USSR. The Slovaks and the Czechs couldn't live together. Some situations are more violent. Yugoslavia just imploded."[11]

In 1987, Preston Manning founded the Reform Party of Canada. In the 1993 federal election, in the riding of Calgary Southwest, he was elected to the House of Commons, along with 51 other Reform candidates. This, the party's first major success in a federal election, was largely due to many conservative voters switching their support from Progressive Conservative to Reform, particularly in western Canada. In the 1997 federal election, Manning led the Reform Party to become the official opposition in the House of Commons.

In a speech given to the Empire Club in 1993, Manning said:

Reformers accept the legitimacy of the aspirations of the Québec people to preserve and enhance their culture and language, and, like other Canadians, to enjoy the benefits of a prosperous economy and democratic society. The separatists—the PQ provincially and the BQ federally—argue that these aspirations can best be met by the separation of Québec from the Canadian federation and its entrance into a looser association called Sovereignty-Association.

Arrayed against the separatists in Québec are what we call the Old Federalists of the traditional parties. As an alternative to the separatist constitutional model, they offer Quebeckers the Old Federalist model of Canada as an equal partnership between two founding races, the English and the French, in which special status may be granted to groups of citizens based on race or language or culture … It is our contention that there is a New Federalism struggling to be born in Canada.[12]

Figure 16-4 ▲

Preston Manning holds the Canadian flag as he waits to enter the Calgary Stampede on 7 July 2000.

1. Compare the views on Canada's national identity expressed by each of these political leaders. What political motivations might be behind these perspectives on Canadian identity?
2. In what ways has your identity and your life been affected by the decision to promote Canada as a multicultural nation? Do you think that this policy benefits you as a Canadian citizen? Explain.

11 Eric Luckacs. "Jacques Parizeau: Speaks on Sovereignty, Survival, and the 'Ethnic Vote' in Canada," *The McGill Tribune*, 18 February 2002. http://media.www.mcgilltribune.com/media/storage/paper234/news/2002/02/18/News/Jacques.Parizeau-186471.shtml

12 Preston Manning, "The Case for a New Federalism," 1 October 1993, in *The Empire Club of Canada Speeches 1993–1994*, ed. Frederic L.R. Jackman, Edward P. Badovinac, and Sonia Kaplan (Toronto: The Empire Club Foundations, 1994), pp. 103–111. http://www.empireclubfoundation.com/details.asp?SpeechID=259&FT=yes.

Explore the Issues

1. There are many perspectives on the role that the government can play in shaping Canada's national identity. Review the information presented in the first section of the chapter and try the following, making sure to emphasize the processes outlined in the Skill Path. SKILLS
   a) Working individually or in a small group, research and create a list of government programs and policies that contribute to Canadian national identity.
   b) Develop criteria to assess the impact of government efforts to shape the national identity.
   c) Based on your criteria, identify the top three government programs and policies that contribute the most toward the development of Canadian national identity. Explain.
   d) Present your ideas to your classmates.

The Evolution of Canadian National Identity

Question for Inquiry

- **What are historical perspectives of Canada as a nation?**

Fast Facts

Did you know that approximately 46 per cent of Canada's population ages 15 years and older—or about 10.3 million people—reported only British, French, and/or Canadian ethnic or cultural origins when surveyed by Statistics Canada in 2003?[13]

According to this statistic, more than *one half* of all Canadians ages 15 and older do not come from a British, French, or "Canadian" background by birth. What implications do you think this has for the direction of Canada's policy to promote a single national identity?

When we think of Canada's national identity, a number of viewpoints come to mind, including

- the home of the First Nations
- a French colony
- a British colony
- home to the Métis
- home to the Inuit
- an independent, sovereign nation
- a blend of origins—Irish, Ukrainian, Chinese, and many others
- a multicultural experiment
- a valuable and effective member of the international community through various organizations, such as the UN, NATO, and others
- a valued ally in the First and Second World Wars and in the Korean War
- a peacekeeping nation
- a hockey nation
- a polite nation
- a "not-American" nation
- many other points of view

13 Statistics Canada, *Ethnic Diversity Survey: Portrait of a Multicultural Society*, September 2003, p. 8. http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-593-XIE/89-593-XIE2003001.pdf.

In this section you will explore the historical views of Canada as a nation, and whether these perspectives have had an effect on Canada's national identity.

Web Link

Check current population trends and statistics by following the link to Statistics Canada on the *Perspectives on Nationalism* website.

Nationalism in Upper and Lower Canada

Immigrants who arrived in Québec in the late 1830s would be greeted by "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state," according to dispatched British representative Lord Durham.[14] The 1839 *Durham Report* recommended that

- Upper and Lower Canada be united into one colony
- responsible government be granted
- French Canadians be assimilated
- municipal institutions be established in Canada

The following are excerpts from Lord Durham's report:

I have little doubt that the French, when once placed, by the legitimate course of events and the working of natural causes, in a minority, would abandon their vain hopes of nationality.[15]

> *I entertain no doubts as to the national character which must be given to Lower Canada; it must be that of the British Empire … it must henceforth be the first and steady purpose of the British Government to establish an English population, with English laws and language, in this Province, and to trust its government to none but a decidedly English legislature.*[16]

If you were a Francophone living in Lower Canada at the time, what would your response be to Lord Durham's attempt to settle the dispute between Upper and Lower Canada? Why might Britain have wanted to assimilate French colonists? How might the *Durham Report* have acted as a catalyst for the continuing French/English tensions in what was to become Canada?

As a result of Lord Durham's report, Upper and Lower Canada were merged into a single colony—the province of Canada—and the use of French in the Legislature was banned. Many Francophones saw the 1840 Act of Union as an attempt to assimilate the French-speaking population of the British colony.

Figure 16-5

The Patriotes were 1830s reformists made up of largely French Canadians and some Irish immigrants. Led by Joseph Papineau, they were opposed to pro-British forces and English colonial authorities. In the Rebellion of 1837, Patriotes troops were led by Wolfred Nelson. The Patriotes defeated the British troops in the Richelieu Valley town of Saint-Denis. Lord Durham was appointed to look into these tensions.

14 Lord Durham, "The Nature of the Problems in Lower Canada," *Report Of Lord Durham on the Affairs of British North America*, 1839. http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/docs/durham/1.htm15.

15 Lord Durham, Recommendations—Assimilation and Union," *Report Of Lord Durham on the Affairs of British North America*, 1839. http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/docs/durham/5.htm.

16 Lord Durham, "Recommendations—Assimilation and Union," *Report Of Lord Durham on the Affairs of British North America*, 1839. http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/docs/durham/4.htm

Web Link

Visit the *Perspectives on Nationalism* website and follow the link to read the full text of Lord Durham's report.

In response to the crises of the time, two of Canada's most interesting reformers took centre stage in the 1840s—Robert Baldwin and Louis La Fontaine. They pressured the governor of the Province of Canada to establish **responsible government** and to restore the French language to the Legislature.

These two men had a deep respect for each other and a mutual desire to establish a united Canada that comprised an equal partnership between French and English. Although English was Canada's sole official language, Louis La Fontaine spoke French in the Assembly of the Province of Canada. By 1849, the Act of Union was changed to allow French to be spoken in the Assembly.

LIBERTY
EAGLE
AUBERGE
THE WAY BROTHER JONATHAN WILL ASTONISH THE NATIVES.
ANNEXATION COMES IN BY THE RAIL, WHILE LIBERTY FLIES OFF IN THE SMOKE.

Figure 16-6

The Annexation Engine, 1886. The cartoon expresses the view that French-Canadian language and other rights would be steamrolled if Lower Canada were to become part of the United States, as some proposed.

Figure 16-7

Upper and Lower Canada in 1791.

Web Link

To view a re-enactment of the Baldwin–La Fontaine compromise, follow the link on the *Perspectives on Nationalism* website.

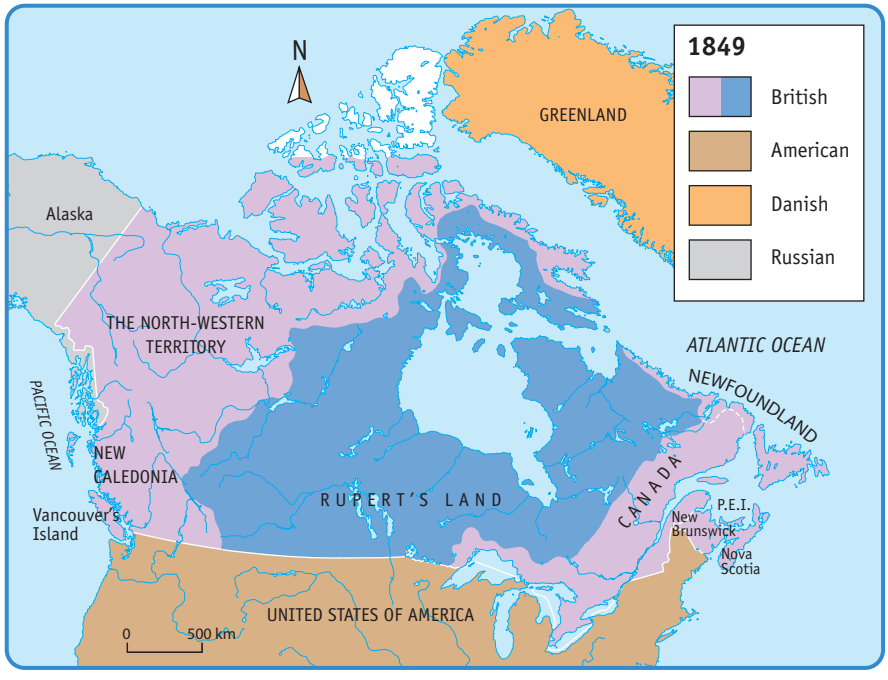

Figure 16-8

Canada and neighbouring territories in 1849

Canada's Fathers of Confederation: Pre- and Post-Confederation

The initiative toward Confederation began with a conference among the four Maritime colonies, including Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, to discuss a Maritime union. Confederation came into being with the 1867 union of the British colonies—New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario (formerly Canada West), and Québec (formerly Canada East)—as provinces with a central government. The 36 participants at the three conferences are known as the original *Fathers of Confederation*.

Portrayed in the cartoon in Figure 16-9 are some of the Fathers of Confederation—George Brown, Sir Francis Hincks, William McDougall, and Sir John A. Macdonald. Each individual is lamenting the "child's" inability to see the "dominant" role each played in making Confederation happen. What does this say about the likelihood of a unified vision of Canada's national identity at the time?

For many reasons, some people in the Maritime provinces had great difficulty accepting the terms and concept of Confederation, as illustrated in Figure 16-10. The battle over Confederation was fought in the newspapers as well as in the Legislature.

Figure 16-9

Confederation! The Much-Fathered Youngster, 1886, by John Wilson Bengough. Pictured, from left to right: George Brown, Sir Francis Hincks, William McDougall, and Sir John A. Macdonald.

Figure 16-10 ▲

A Game of See-Saw. Who does the figure in the background represent?

Ideas and Opinions

John A. Macdonald was Canada's first prime minister, the leader of the newly confederated nation-state of Canada in 1867. In 1865, he spoke the following words to a gathering of the leaders of the five British North American colonies:

> *I say to this House, if you do not believe that the union of the Colonies is for the advantage of the country, that the joining of these five peoples into one nation under one sovereign is for the benefit of all, then reject the scheme. Reject if you do not believe it to be for the present advantage and future prosperity of yourselves and your children. But if, after a calm and full consideration of this scheme, it is believed, as a whole, to be for the advantage of this Province—if the House and country believe this union to be one which will ensure for us British laws, British connection, and British freedom, and increase and develop the social, political, and material prosperity of the country—then I implore this House and the country to lay aside all prejudices and accept the scheme which we offer. I ask this House to meet the question in the same spirit in which the delegates met it. I ask each member of this House to lay aside his own opinions as to particular details and to accept the scheme as to a whole, if he think it beneficial as a whole.*
>
> *If we are not blind to our present position we must see the hazardous situation in which all the great interests of Canada stand in respect to the United States. I am no alarmist, I do not believe in the prospect of immediate war. I believe that the common sense of the two nations will prevent a war; still we cannot trust to probabilities. The government and legislature would be wanting in their duty to the people if they ran any risk. We know that the United States at this moment are engaged in a war of enormous dimensions: that the occasion of a war with Great Britain has again and again arisen and may at any time in the future again arise. We cannot foresee what may be the result; we cannot say but that the two nations may drift into a war as other nations have done before. It would then be too late, when war had commenced, to think of measures for strengthening ourselves or to begin negotiations for a union with the sister Provinces.*[17]

—Sir John Alexander Macdonald, "On Canadian Confederation," 1865, in William Jennings Bryan and Francis W. Halsey, eds., *The World's Famous Orations* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906).

According to the passage above, what was John A Macdonald's major argument for Confederation? Has his point of view become a commonly held Canadian perspective? Is it part of our national identity?

17 From: http://www.bartleby.com/268/5/1.html.

Louis Riel: Another Canadian Founding Father?

INVESTIGATION

Something to Think About: Some people have recently argued that Louis Riel should be regarded as one of the Fathers of Confederation for his role in bringing Manitoba into Confederation following the Red River Rebellion of 1869–1870.

An Example: Louis Riel was a Métis leader. When the Canadian government bought Prince Rupert's land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869, it began to survey the area established by the Métis.

The Métis, led by Riel, prevented the governor from entering the territory, and established a provisional government to negotiate directly with the federal government, establishing what is now the Province of Manitoba. It was during these negotiations that the members of a pro-Canadian group who opposed the provisional government were arrested, and one of them—a Presbyterian Orangeman named Thomas Scott—was executed. Riel fled to the United States to escape federal authorities, but returned in 1884 to support Métis grievances against the federal government. These particular Métis that Riel tried to help were living in what is now Saskatchewan. The events, which culminated in 1885, are now known as the Northwest Resistance. Riel was captured, tried, and executed for high treason against the state. His execution was widely opposed in Francophone regions of Canada.

On 12 November 1998, the federal government pledged that it would affirm the contributions of the Métis people and reflect Louis Riel's proper place in Canadian history.

The following is an excerpt from the second reading of Bill S-35, in which Senator Thelma Chalifoux presents her view that Riel was a founding father of Manitoba and should be recognized as a Canadian hero.

Louis Riel Bill
Second Reading—Debate Adjourned

Hon. Thelma J. Chalifoux: *moved the second reading of Bill S-35, to honour Louis Riel and the Métis People*

She said: Honourable senators, I rise this day to speak to Bill S-35, an act that honours Louis Riel as a Métis patriot and Canadian hero, and to acknowledge the Métis people.

It is a great honour and privilege to speak today to this bill. I will do my best to tell honourable senators what it means to me. Mr. Guy Freedman, a Métis writer from Manitoba, has assisted me greatly in this story of our Canadian hero. It is ironic that, 116 years ago today, the Métis people and Riel's family gathered in St. Boniface, Manitoba, to honour this great man

Figure 16-11 ▲
Métis leader Louis Riel

Fast Facts

Orangemen refers to people who belong to the Orange Order, a Protestant fraternal society, founded in 1795 in Ireland. This society's name is derived from the victory of William of Orange against the Irish at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. During an Irish uprising in 1798, Orangemen were a link between the British government and the Protestants in Ireland. Orangemen who migrated to Britain and to its colonies established lodges that helped promote their society.

and lay him to rest at a funeral attended by members of his family and hundreds of his supporters.

Most Métis—in fact most Canadians—know a great deal about Louis Riel. More has been written about him than Sir John A. Macdonald; but what is written is largely controversial. Pretty much everyone has his own opinion. Was he insane? Was he a hero and a prophet? Just who was he? One thing is for sure: He was the leader of the Métis people at a time when all hell was breaking loose out West. History shows that he was truly a remarkable man … In March 1982, the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada unanimously adopted resolutions recognizing the various and significant contributions of Louis Riel to Canada and to the Métis people, in particular, recognizing his unique and historic role as the founder of Manitoba. In May 1992, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba unanimously passed a resolution recognizing the unique and historic role of Louis Riel as a founder of Manitoba and his contribution in the development of the Canadian Confederation … I now urge all of my colleagues to support Bill S-35, as Canada truly does have wonderful, dedicated heroes.

Hon Senators: *Hear, hear!*

Hon Gerry St. Germain: *Honourable senators, as a Manitoba Métis, I should like to ask for the opportunity to adjourn the debate on Bill S-35 so that we could speak to this in the future. Bill S-35 is important, and as much as I see partisanship rearing its head on the other side, I am hopeful that it does not exist in respect of this bill.*

I compliment Senator Chalifoux on this, and if it please the house I should like to move adjournment of debate.

The Hon. the Speaker: *That is in the form of a question to Senator Chalifoux, at least in the first instance.*

Senator Chalifoux: *Honourable senators, before Senator St. Germain adjourns the debate, I wish to inform all of my colleagues that there is absolutely no partisanship. We are here as Canadians, and we have to really look at who we are as Canadians—no partisanship.*

Hon. Senators: *Hear, hear!*

Hon Terry Stratton: *Honourable senators, as a Manitoban who currently lives about half a mile south of where the burial took place, I am familiar with the history of Louis Riel. I am hopeful that the entire story will be told as we progress through this bill. There was such a problem because of the execution of Thomas Scott, the Orangeman. That story needs to be told as well, on balance, to create an understanding of why these events transpired later. It is a fascinating story.*

Although Riel wanted to become independent, I do not think Canadians realize how close Manitoba came to becoming a part of the United States. It was the influx of Orangemen into Manitoba at that time that prevented that from happening. That is the side of the story that should be told as well.

Senator Chalifoux: *There are two sides.*

Senator Stratton: *That is why I ask the question. Can we be assured that both sides of the story are told? In consideration of my historic roots, I should like to ensure that that takes place.*

Senator Chalifoux: *Yes, I, too, should like to make it clear, because it is our side of the story that should also be told. There are some interesting facts that were not told, because it was the non-Aboriginal reporters who chose to tell the story. I am hopeful that, in this debate, the entire story will be told.*

Senator Stratton: *I agree that this is an important debate for Manitoba and the Métis. Yes, Senator Chalifoux is absolutely right: White folks told the story and the Métis did not have the opportunity to tell the story. I want to ensure that there is a balance, and Senator Chalifoux has assured me of that.*

This debate would then lead to forgiveness by the Métis of the Prime Minister of the day. Is that possible?

Senator Chalifoux: *The debate will rage on, Senator Stratton, because, in my opinion, what happened in history, happened. In those days, bigotry and racism were very much a part of everyday life. We must look beyond that and realize the contributions that our leaders have made. Riel was one of our leaders. In the debate, the true story will be told.*

The Hon. the Speaker: *If senators wish to ask Senator Chalifoux questions, please proceed.*

Hon Laurier L. LaPierre: *Is Senator Chalifoux aware of the racism that existed for the condemnation of Louis Riel? He was told by Sir John A. Macdonald that he would hang, even if every dog in Quebec barked. Consequently, I believe that Senator Chalifoux is doing a great favour by raising this issue for debate.*

Was the honourable senator aware that at the beginning of the debate, some time ago, I was opposed to the pardon of Louis Riel? However, since I have met Senator Chalifoux, it is with great honour that I shall support it.

On motion of Senator St. Germain, debate adjourned.[18]

1. This excerpt from the Bill S-35 debate illustrates a variety of perspectives involved in one important element of Canadian history. What would be your position in this debate? How would you support your position?
2. How have the events surrounding the Métis uprising influenced Canadian national identity?

18 "Louis Riel Bill: Second-Reading Debate Adjourned," 12 December 2001. http://www.sen.parl.gc.ca/gstgermain/PDF/Deb/LOUIS%20RIEL12Dec01.doc.

Explore the Issues

1. Through the link on the *Perspectives on Nationalism* website, research three editorial cartoons from Library and Archives Canada about pre- and post-Confederation Canada.
   a) How does each cartoon use images to convey ideas about Canada before and after Confederation?
   b) Draw or describe your own political cartoon to illustrate your understandings about the evolution of Canada's national identity.

Building Canadian National Identity

Question for Inquiry

- **How can differing perspectives build a national identity?**

As you read the following quotations about Canadian identity by ordinary Canadians, consider what perspective each represents.

> *Many Canadian nationalists harbour the bizarre fear that should we ever reject royalty, we would instantly mutate into Americans, as though the Canadian sense of self is so frail and delicate a bud, that the only thing stopping it from being swallowed whole by the US is an English lady in a funny hat.*[19]
>
> **—Canadian author Will Ferguson**

> *What is a Canadian? A Canadian is a fellow wearing English tweeds, a Hong Kong shirt and Spanish shoes, who sips Brazilian coffee sweetened with Philippine sugar from a Bavarian cup while nibbling Swiss cheese, sitting at a Danish desk over a Persian rug, after coming home in a German car from an Italian movie … and then writes his Member of Parliament with a Japanese ballpoint pen on French paper, demanding that he do something about foreigners taking away our Canadian jobs.*[20]
>
> **—Anonymous**

> *Canadians have been so busy explaining to the Americans that we aren't British, and to the British that we aren't Americans, that we haven't had time to become Canadians.*[21]
>
> **—Helen Gordon McPherson**

How does the perspective represented in each quotation above contribute to the development of Canada's national identity?

Since colonial times, Canada has been a nation of immigrants. Immigration has had an impact on our national identity, and our immigration policies have at times reflected changing perspectives on

19 From: http://www.carleton.ca/jmc/cnews/17102003/connections/c3.html.
20 From: http://www.canucklehead.ca/canada.html.
21 From: http://www1.bbiq.jp/quotations/mcpherson.htm.

our national identity. From Confederation until into the 20th century, Canada had preferential immigration policies, although with varying degrees of restrictiveness. Immigrants from the British Isles were actively recruited up until Confederation. Various factors—such as the desire to settle Rupert's Land and the need for labour for manufacturing and the building of the railroad—fuelled a more aggressive campaign to recruit immigrants.

Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior from 1896 to 1905, implemented a vigorous recruitment program of large-scale immigration from eastern and central Europe to Canada. This selective recruitment brought with it members of religious groups such as the Doukhobors and Mennonites. With this recruitment came a greater diversity of languages, cultures, and religions to Canada.

In the beginning of the 20th century until the 1930s, immigration policy became much more restrictive, including formal means of deporting "undesirables." From 1906 to 1920, Canada moved to exclude immigration from Asia. In the late 1920s, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway companies were given the right to recruit workers directly from central and eastern Europe.

Figure 16-12 ▲

Immigrants arriving at Union Station, Toronto, 1910

What Is a Canadian?

There are many views on what being Canadian means. Can there be a common Canadian national identity given the degree of diversity in Canada's population?

On 17 April 1982, after Canada's Constitution had been patriated, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau stated:

It is true that our will to live together has sometimes appeared to be in deep hibernation; but it is there nevertheless, alive and tenacious, in the hearts of Canadians of every province and territory. I wish simply that the bringing home of our Constitution marks the end of a long winter, the breaking up of the ice-jams and the beginning of a new spring.[22]

Other people, such as Canadian writer Scott Carpenter, are less optimistic.

What is Canadian? … We live in a nation that claims that the rights of the individual reign supreme but at the same time fails to define what a "right" is. We preach tolerance for foreign cultures on the one hand but intolerance for the individual on the other. We are a nation of contradictions floating helplessly in a sea of confusion with no framework for living, with no proper definition of justice.[23]

Figure 16-13 ▲

Matthew Coon Come, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, taking part in the opening ceremonies at the 23rd annual assembly in Kahnawake, Québec, 16 July 2002. The three-day meeting addressed a variety of economic and social issues affecting First Nations across Canada.

22 Pierre Elliott Trudeau, "Remarks at the Proclamation Ceremony," 17 April 1982. http://www.collectionscanada.ca/2/4/h4-4024-e.html.

23 Scott Carpenter, "The Great Canadian Identity Crisis," *Le Québécois Libre* 53 (January 2000): 11–12.

Still others, like Chief Matthew Coon Come, an Aboriginal politician of the Cree Nation and activist for Aboriginal people, present another perspective. In 1987, Chief Coon Come was elected as grand chief and chairman of Québec's Grand Council of the Cree, and from 2000 to 2003 he was elected national chief of the Assembly of First Nations. He spoke internationally for the rights of First Nations peoples. He has expressed his views on Canada's evolution and government policy:

However, right through the nation-building exercises of King Charles' grant of Rupert's Land to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the Constitutional Act of Westminster of 1791, the establishment of the Province of Canada in 1840, and the confederation of Canada in 1867, First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples in Canada have endured a history of blatantly colonial indifference to—and actual suppression of—our existence and of our status and rights as nations and peoples in Canada.

This long history has included:

- *the continued application of the colonial and oppressive Indian Act;*
- *the removal of successive generations of First Nations children into residential schools to bring about the elimination of social and cultural integrity of our societies;*
- *the dispossession of Indigenous peoples through forced relations and successive taking of almost all of the land and resources of First Nations peoples; and*
- *the enactment and enforcement of other laws, policies and practices calculated to weaken our societies, economies and governments and force our people to assimilate and disappear into the Canadian "mainstream" as individuals.*[24]

Fast Facts

Did you know that the 1927 Indian Act forbade First Nations people from forming political organizations to represent their interests?

What would your view of Canada be if you suffered from discrimination and were denied basic rights? Would this help or hinder your feeling of belonging as a Canadian?

1. What is the relationship between a people's rights and freedoms and their feelings of nationalism? Draw on examples from these quotations in your answer.
2. Compare your ideas on Canadian identity with those from these quotations. How are they similar? How do they differ?
3. What do you think most strongly influences people's definitions of Canadian identity? Create a case supporting your answer.

Explore the Issues

1. a) Conduct an Internet search on the Assembly of First Nations (the former National Indian Brotherhood) and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.
   b) In a small group, create a graphic organizer and use it to evaluate the positions of these two groups regarding the federal government's actions toward their claims since issuing its Statement of Reconciliation. Be sure to do this on a word processor so that it is easily adjustable and reproducible.
   c) Create a brief presentation that incorporates audio, video, or computer technology to summarize your findings. SKILLS
2. From this section of the chapter, select the perspective on Canada's national identity that you most identify with, and justify your choice. How does this perspective affect the development of a national identity?

24 Matthew Coon Come, in "Remarks of National Chief Matthew Coon Come" to the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit and London University, 8 April 2003, pp. 2–3. http://www.cpsu.org.uk/downloads/MatthewC.pdf.

Reflect and Analyze

In this chapter you have explored a variety of perspectives on Canada's national identity. You have seen that there are diverse perspectives on whether there is a Canadian national identity, and if so, what it is. By now, you should have understandings that will allow you to respond to the Chapter Issue: ***To what extent have perspectives on Canada as a nation contributed to the development of a national identity?***

Respond to Ideas

1. Investigate two or more individuals or groups who express understandings about Canada's national identity. They may be from within Canada or from anywhere in the world. While you are researching, keep an eye out for interesting quotations, facts, or audio or video clips to enhance your final presentation.

   Create a presentation on these understandings of national unity. Integrate some element of technology into your presentation. SKILLS

2. Create a chart highlighting how significant individuals, groups, and events have influenced Canada's current national identity.

Respond to Issues

3. The Chapter Issue is ***"To what extent have perspectives on Canada as a nation contributed to the development of a national identity?"*** Give examples of how the views and actions of groups and individuals from Canada's past and present have shaped Canada's national identity.

4. To what extent has multiculturalism strengthened or undermined the fabric of Canada's national identity? Explain, with examples from Canadian affairs, nationally and internationally.

Recognize Relationships between Concepts, Issues, and Citizenship

5. Did your perception of Canada's identity change as you worked through this chapter? Explain.

6. As a citizen of Canada, what is your vision of the Canadian identity? To what extent should a citizen be willing to work toward protecting and honouring that vision? How do the shared rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens influence their national identity?